

# FAST FACTS: ATROPHIC VAGINITIS

## WHAT IT IS

Atrophic vaginitis (AV), also known as vaginal atrophy, is a condition that involves the thinning, drying, and swelling of the vaginal walls. It typically occurs after menopause; however, some women experience the condition for other reasons that may cause their body's estrogen production to decrease.

Atrophic vaginitis can range in severity from moderate to severe. Vaginal dryness, discharge, genital itching, burning sensation when urinating, frequent urinary tract infections (UTI), urinary incontinence, bleeding after sex, and discomfort during sex are common symptoms.

## CAUSES

The underlying cause of vaginal atrophy is a decrease in estrogen production. As your body produces less estrogen, your vaginal tissues become thinner, drier, less elastic, and more fragile.

A decline in estrogen can occur at other times besides menopause, including:

- during breast-feeding
- after removal of ovaries (surgical menopause)
- after certain treatments of cancer

## TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR ATROPHIC VAGINITIS

Changes associated with vaginal atrophy are reversible. Many women see improvement in three to four weeks. First-line therapies for women with AV symptoms include non-hormonal lubricants or vaginal moisturizers. Options such as coconut oil can help to lubricate and rehydrate the vaginal walls.

1. **Coconut Oil** - Coconut oil is a healthy fat that helps restore the body's natural level of hydration. This treatment can be used as a vaginal lubricant.
2. **Replens or Luvena** - Replens or Luvena is estrogen free and helps to replenish vaginal moisture and supplements the body's natural lubrication. It helps with dryness, UTI's, overactive bladder and other bothersome symptoms (pressure, incomplete emptying, getting up at night, burning, etc.). Available over the counter.
3. **Vaginal Estrogen Therapy** - For symptomatic women who do not respond to lubricants and moisturizers, or women with moderate to severe atrophic vaginitis, prescribed low dose vaginal estrogen therapy is the standard. There are no known ways to prevent atrophy of the genital area. However, by using vaginal estrogen therapy, many of the symptoms experienced can be decreased or even eliminated.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Vaginal Estrogen therapy helps to rehydrate and thicken the vaginal and urethral tissue. The benefits of vaginal estrogen therapy include:

- increased comfort during sex
- improved urinary leakage
- less urinary frequency and urgency
- decreased urinary tract infections

*If you are experiencing symptoms of atrophic vaginitis, please talk to your primary care provider about treatment options.*

